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DESIGNATED/ELECTED OFFICE (DO/EO/US)

U.S. APPLICATION NO. (IF KNOWN, SEE 37 CFR

CONCERNING A FILING UNDER 35 U.S.C. 371

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INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO.

PCT/CH99/00205

INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE

14 May 1999

PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED

none

TITLE OF INVENTION

COMMUNICATION METHOD AND SUITABLE DEVICE FOR COMMUNICATION FORUMS

APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US

LOHER Urs et al.

Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information:

1. ☒ This is a **FIRST** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
2. ☐ This is a **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
3. ☒ This is an express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)). The submission must include items (5), (6), (9) and (24) indicated below.
4. ☒ The US has been elected by the expiration of 19 months from the priority date (Article 31).
5. ☒ A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371 (c) (2))
 - a. ☐ is attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau).
 - b. ☒ has been communicated by the International Bureau.
 - c. ☐ is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US).
6. ☒ An English language translation of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)).
 - a. ☒ is attached hereto.
 - b. ☐ has been previously submitted under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).
7. ☒ Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371 (c)(3))
 - a. ☐ are attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau).
 - b. ☒ have been communicated by the International Bureau.
 - c. ☐ have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired.
 - d. ☐ have not been made and will not be made.
8. ☒ An English language translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)).
9. ☒ An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371 (c)(4)).
10. ☒ An English language translation of the annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371 (c)(5)).
11. ☐ A copy of the International Preliminary Examination Report (PCT/IPEA/409).
12. ☒ A copy of the International Search Report (PCT/ISA/210).

Items 13 to 20 below concern document(s) or information included:

13. ☐ An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98.
14. ☒ An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included.
15. ☒ A **FIRST** preliminary amendment.
16. ☐ A **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** preliminary amendment.
17. ☐ A substitute specification.
18. ☐ A change of power of attorney and/or address letter.
19. ☐ A computer-readable form of the sequence listing in accordance with PCT Rule 13ter.2 and 35 U.S.C. 1.821 - 1.825.
20. ☐ A second copy of the published international application under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).
21. ☐ A second copy of the English language translation of the international application under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).
22. ☐ Certificate of Mailing by Express Mail
23. ☒ Other items or information:

Request for Consideration of Documents Cited in International Search Report

Drawings (1 Sheet)/Form PTO-1595

Amended Sheets Under Article 19 (Pages 13, 14, 15, and 16)

Amended Sheets Under Article 34 (Pages 2, 2a, 13, 14, 15, and 16)

09/926505

215871US

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT & TRADEMARK OFFICE

IN RE APPLICATION OF :
 URS LOHER ET AL : ATTN: APPLICATION DIVISION
 SERIAL NO: NEW U.S. PCT APPLN :
 (Based on PCT/CH99/00205)
 FILED: HERewith :
 FOR: COMMUNICATION METHOD :
 AND SUITABLE DEVICE FOR
 COMMUNICATION FORUMS

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20231

SIR:

Prior to a first examination on the merits, please amend the above-identified
 application as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Amended) A communication method, in which at least two communication
 participants communicate with one another by means of spoken language in a round of
 communication by means of communications terminals via a telecommunications network,
 the said communications terminals being interconnected via the said telecommunications
 network for a said communication round when the said communication participants have
 selected a common communication forum, wherein

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the said communication participants select the common communication forum by means of the said communications terminals.

2. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 1, wherein at least certain of the said communications terminals are mobile devices, and the said communications network comprises at least one mobile network.

3. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 1, wherein the said communication participants select, via a menu structure, a communication forum from a list of defined communication forums or define a new communication forum, a defined communication forum being assigned a designation, designating for example a topic.

4. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 3, wherein the said menu structure is displayed on a display of the said communications terminals, and the said communication forum is selected or defined by means of operating elements of the said communications terminals.

5. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 3, wherein the said communication forum is selected or defined under speech-controlled menu guidance by means of operating elements of the said communications terminal.

6. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 1, wherein at least certain of the said communication forums are available only to communication participants located in a particular geographical area assigned to the respective communication forum.

7. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 3, wherein access to a said communication forum can be denied to an interested communication participant by the said communication participant who defined the said communication forum.

8. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 1, wherein the said communications terminals are interconnected for a said communication round by means of conference circuit.

9. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 1, wherein one of the said communication participants registers for a communication forum when no other communication participant has yet selected the respective communication forum, and a round of communication between the registered communication participant and at least one other communication participant begins when this at least one other communication participant has selected the respective communication forum.

10. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 1, wherein one of the said communication participants registers for at least one communication forum specifying in addition at least one other communication participant as a communication partner for the respective communication forum, so that he is notified when a specified communication partner has selected a respective communication forum.

11. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 1, wherein at least certain of the said communication forums have a temporally limited availability.

12. (Amended) A chat server which comprises a communications module for connection with telecommunications networks in which communication participants communicate with one another by means of communications terminals, which server has a table in which information about communication forums is stored, and which server has a command module that is set up such that it is able to receive and execute commands from the said communication participants, the said command module enabling the said communication participants to select one of the said communication forums by means of the said commands, the said communications module being set up such that it is able to

interconnect at least two of the said communication participants, who have selected a common communication forum, for a round of communication, in which the said communication participants communicate by means of spoken language, over a said telecommunications network, wherein

the command module is moreover set up such that it is able to receive over the said telecommunications networks said commands entered by the said communication participants by means of the said communication terminals.

13. (Amended) The chat server according to claim 12, wherein at least certain of the said communications terminals are mobile devices, and said telecommunications networks comprise at least one mobile network.

14. (Amended) The chat server according to claim 12, wherein the said command module is set up such that the said communication participants are able to select a communication forum from the said table or define a new communication forum, a designation being assigned to a defined communication forum, designating for example a topic.

15. (Amended) The chat server according to claim 14, wherein the said command module is set up such that it is able to prepare a list of the defined communication forums stored in the said table and transmit it by means of the said communications module to the said communications terminals over the said telecommunications networks.

16. (Amended) The chat server according to claim 12, wherein at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table are limited geographically and contain indications about a geographic area, and the said command module is set up such that it makes available geographically limited communication forums only to communication participants who are located in this geographic area.

17. (Amended) The chat server according to claim 14, wherein at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table contain indications about a first communication participant who has defined the respective communication forum, and the said command module is set up such that it is able to pass on commands from a second communication participant regarding the selection of one of the said communication forums to the first communication participant and is able to receive a command from this first communication participant to deny the second communication participant access to the respective communication forum.

18. (Amended) The chat server according to claim 12, wherein the said communications module is set up such that it is able to interconnect communications terminals for one of the said communication rounds by means of conference circuit.

19. (Amended) The chat server according to claim 12, wherein at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table contain indications about communication participants who have registered for a communication forum when no other communication participant has yet selected the respective communication forum, and the said command module is set up such that it is able to connect a communication round between the communication participant who has registered and at least one other communication participant when this at least one other communication participant has selected the respective communication forum.

20. (Amended) The chat server according to claim 12, wherein at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table contain indications about first communication participants, who have registered for a communication forum, and about second communication participants, who have been specified as communication partners by the first communication participants, and the said command module is set up such that it

informs a registered first communication participant when a specified communication partner has selected a respective communication forum.

21. (Amended) The chat server according to claim 12, wherein at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table contain indications relating to a temporally limited availability.

IN THE ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Please amend the abstract on page 17 as follows:

Communication method and suitable device for communications forums in which at least two communication participants communicate with one another in a round of communication in spoken language by communications terminals, in particular using mobile devices, via a telecommunications network, in particular a mobile telecommunications network. Communications terminals are interconnected via the telecommunications network for a round of communication when communication participants have selected a common communications forum by the communications terminals. A communication participant departs from a round of communication in that he/she leaves the respective communication forum or terminates the communication via the telecommunications network with his/her communications terminal.

REMARKS

Favorable consideration of this application, as presently amended, is respectfully requested.

The present preliminary amendment is submitted to place the above-identified application in more proper format under United States practice.

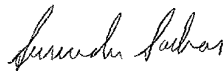
By the present preliminary amendment, the claims have been amended to no longer recite any reference numerals or multiple dependencies.

The Abstract has also been amended by the present response to delete reference numerals and legal phraseology, and to clarify the language therein.

The present application is believed to be in condition for a full and thorough examination on the merits. An early and favorable consideration of the present application is hereby respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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Serial No:

Amendment Filed on:

11-13-2001IN THE CLAIMS

--1. (Amended) A communication method, in which at least two communication participants communicate with one another by means of spoken language in a round of communication by means of communications terminals [(11, 12, 21)] via a telecommunications network [(1, 2)], the said communications terminals [(11, 12, 21)] being interconnected via the said telecommunications network [(1, 2)] for a said communication round when the said communication participants have selected a common communication forum, wherein

the said communication participants select the common communication forum by means of the said communications terminals [(11, 12, 21)].

2. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 1, wherein at least certain of the said communications terminals are mobile devices [(11, 12)], and the said communications network comprises at least one mobile network.

3. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 1 [or 2], wherein the said communication participants select, via a menu structure, a communication forum from a list of defined communication forums or define a new communication forum, a defined communication forum being assigned a designation, designating for example a topic.

4. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 3, wherein the said menu structure is displayed on a display [(111, 211)] of the said communications terminals

[(11, 12, 21)], and the said communication forum is selected or defined by means of operating elements [(112, 212)] of the said communications terminals [(11, 12, 21)].

5. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 3, wherein the said communication forum is selected or defined under speech-controlled menu guidance by means of operating elements [(112, 212)] of the said communications terminal [(11, 12, 21)].

6. (Amended) The communication method according to [one of the claims 1 to 5] claim 1, wherein at least certain of the said communication forums are available only to communication participants located in a particular geographical area assigned to the respective communication forum.

7. (Amended) The communication method according to [one of the claims 3 to 6] claim 3, wherein access to a said communication forum can be denied to an interested communication participant by the said communication participant who defined the said communication forum.

8. (Amended) The communication method according to [one of the claims 1 to 7] claim 1, wherein the said communications terminals [(11, 12, 21)] are interconnected for a said communication round by means of conference circuit.

9. (Amended) The communication method according to [one of the claims 1 to 8] claim 1, wherein one of the said communication participants registers for a communication forum when no other communication participant has yet selected the respective communication forum, and a round of communication between the registered communication participant and at least one other communication participant begins when this at least one other communication participant has selected the respective communication forum.

10. (Amended) The communication method according to [one of the claims 1 to 9] claim 1, wherein one of the said communication participants registers for at least one

communication forum specifying in addition at least one other communication participant as a communication partner for the respective communication forum, so that he is notified when a specified communication partner has selected a respective communication forum.

11. (Amended) The communication method according to [one of the claims 1 to 10] claim 1, wherein at least certain of the said communication forums have a temporally limited availability.

12. (Amended) A chat server [(3)] which comprises a communications module [(31)] for connection with telecommunications networks [(1, 2)] in which communication participants communicate with one another by means of communications terminals [(11, 12, 21)], which server has a table [(33)] in which information about communication forums is stored, and which server has a command module [(32)] that is set up such that it is able to receive and execute commands from the said communication participants, the said command module [(32)] enabling the said communication participants to select one of the said communication forums by means of the said commands, the said communications module [(31)] being set up such that it is able to interconnect at least two of the said communication participants, who have selected a common communication forum, for a round of communication, in which the said communication participants communicate by means of spoken language, over a said telecommunications network [(1, 2)], wherein

the command module [(32)] is moreover set up such that it is able to receive over the said telecommunications networks [(1, 2)] said commands entered by the said communication participants by means of the said communication terminals [(11, 12, 21)].

13. (Amended) The chat server [(3)] according to claim 12, wherein at least certain of the said communications terminals are mobile devices [(11, 12)], and said telecommunications networks comprise at least one mobile network [(1)].

14. (Amended) The chat server [(3)] according to [one of the claims 12 or 13] claim 12, wherein the said command module [(32)] is set up such that the said communication participants are able to select a communication forum from the said table [(33)] or define a new communication forum, a designation being assigned to a defined communication forum, designating for example a topic.

15. (Amended) The chat server [(3)] according to claim 14, wherein the said command module [(32)] is set up such that it is able to prepare a list of the defined communication forums stored in the said table [(33)] and transmit it by means of the said communications module [(31)] to the said communications terminals [(11, 12, 21)] over the said telecommunications networks [(1, 2)].

16. (Amended) The chat server [(3)] according to [one of the claims 12 to 15] claim 12, wherein at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table [(33)] are limited geographically and contain indications about a geographic area, and the said command module [(32)] is set up such that it makes available geographically limited communication forums only to communication participants who are located in this geographic area.

17. (Amended) The chat server [(3)] according to [one of the claims 14 to 16] claim 14, wherein at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table [(33)] contain indications about a first communication participant who has defined the respective communication forum, and the said command module [(32)] is set up such that it is able to pass on commands from a second communication participant regarding the selection of one of the said communication forums to the first communication participant and is able to receive a command from this first communication participant to deny the second communication participant access to the respective communication forum.

18. (Amended) The chat server [(3)] according to [one of the claims 12 to 17] claim 12, wherein the said communications module [(31)] is set up such that it is able to interconnect communications terminals [(11, 12, 21)] for one of the said communication rounds by means of conference circuit.

19. (Amended) The chat server [(3)] according to [one of the claims 12 to 18] claim 12, wherein at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table [(33)] contain indications about communication participants who have registered for a communication forum when no other communication participant has yet selected the respective communication forum, and the said command module [(32)] is set up such that it is able to connect a communication round between the communication participant who has registered and at least one other communication participant when this at least one other communication participant has selected the respective communication forum.

20. (Amended) The chat server [(3)] according to [one of the claims 12 to 19] claim 12, wherein at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table [(33)] contain indications about first communication participants, who have registered for a communication forum, and about second communication participants, who have been specified as communication partners by the first communication participants, and the said command module [(32)] is set up such that it informs a registered first communication participant when a specified communication partner has selected a respective communication forum.

21. (Amended) The chat server [(3)] according to [one of the claims 12 to 20] claim 12, wherein at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table [(33)] contain indications relating to a temporally limited availability.--

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

--Communication method and suitable device [(3)] for communications forums in which at least two communication participants communicate with one another in a round of communication in spoken language by [means of] communications terminals [(11, 12, 21)], in particular using mobile devices, via a telecommunications network [(1, 2)], in particular a mobile telecommunications network[, communications]. Communications terminals [(11, 12, 21) being] are interconnected via the telecommunications network [(1,2)] for a round of communication when communication participants have selected a common communications forum by [means of] the communications terminals [(11, 12), and a] .A communication participant [departing] departs from a round of communication in that he/she leaves the respective communication forum or terminates the communication via the telecommunications network [(1, 2)] with his/her communications terminal [(11, 12, 21)].--

1/PRTS

Communication Method and Suitable Device for Communication Forums

This invention relates to a communication method and a suitable device for communication forums. In particular, this invention relates to a communication method for communication forums according to the preamble of the independent method claim and to a suitable device for communication forums according to the preamble of the independent device claim.

Communication forums, in which communication participants are able to communicate with one another in a communication round via a telecommunications network, are known above all by the term "chat rooms," and are becoming more and more popular with the growing spread of the Internet. Chat rooms, i.e. communication forums, can be specified by topic and/or can be aimed at certain target groups, e.g. age groups or gender groups. Using a self-defined, unambiguous user name, a communication participant typically registers with a communication forum service (chat service), and selects a communication forum that interests him from among a plurality of communication forums offered, it being possible for him, before making his definitive selection, to take into consideration, for example, the number of communication participants in this communication forum who are already taking part in a communication round. Afterward he can follow the round of communication in progress in the selected communication forum on the screen of his communications terminal, typically a personal computer with a modem and connected to the Internet via an Internet service provider, and can take part therein. Communication contributions of a communication participant taking part in a communication round are shown on the screen with reference to the author of the text, or respectively entered as text by the communication participants taking part by means of the keyboard. To escape the abundance of texts communicated by numerous communication participants and/or to set up a private communication round, private communication forums or so-called "separées," are defined with pre-defined commands. Although such communication forums are valued by many communication participants, many participants find the entry of text rather tedious and would prefer communication forums with verbal rounds of communication. Moreover the users of the conventional communication forums are either dependent upon linked personal computers or upon rather unwieldy mobile computers with a sufficiently large screen for display of the communicated texts.

Described in the patent application EP 817 457 A2 is a system for anonymous speech communication in which interested communication participants, who have selected a common communication forum, are interconnected via a telephone network for a communication round carried out in spoken language. According to EP 817 457 A2, the interested communication participants have to enter by means of a personal computer the telephone number of the telephone apparatus, via which they want to carry out the communication round, and the identification of the desired communication forum, and transmit the entered telephone number and identification via an access network to the system. The system according to EP 817 457 A2 connects the telephone apparatuses of the communication participants, who have selected a common communication forum, assigned to the indicated telephone numbers, by means of a conference circuit over the telephone network. The necessary entry of the telephone numbers of the telephone apparatuses to be used has the drawback that entry mistakes can thereby be made, leading to wrong connections between communication participants. Moreover, the necessity of having to use different communications terminals for selecting a communication forum and for setting up a communication round is considered inconvenient by users.

It is the object of this invention to propose a new and better method for communication forums and a device suitable therefor, which make possible communication forums with text-free rounds of communication.

This object is achieved according to the present invention through the elements of the independent claims. Further advantageous embodiments follow moreover from the dependent claims and from the description.

These objects are achieved by the invention in that in the communication method, in which at least two communication participants communicate with one another in a communication round by means of communications terminals via a telecommunications network, communications terminals being interconnected via the telecommunications network for a round of communication when said communication participants have selected a common communication

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forum by means of their communications terminals, the communication participants communicate by means of spoken language.

Preferably at least certain said communications terminals are mobile devices, for example mobile radio telephones or communication-capable laptop or palmtop computers, and the said telecommunication network comprises at least one mobile network, for instance a GSM or UMTS or another mobile network. This has the advantage that text-free communication forums can also be made available and accessible to mobile communication participants.

A communication participant can preferably select a communication forum, via a menu structure, from a list of defined communication forums or define a new communication forum, a defined communication forum being assigned a designation, designating for example a topic.

In various embodiment variants, the menu structure with the list of the defined communication forums is displayed on a display of a communications terminal, and a communication forum is selected or defined by means of operating elements of the communications terminal, or, with speech-controlled menu guidance, a communications forum is selected or defined by means of operating elements of the communications terminal.

In an embodiment variant, at least certain communication forums are available only to communication participants located in a particular geographic area assigned to the respective communication forum. This has the advantage

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that communication forums having only local significance, for example, are not unnecessarily overloaded with communication participants located outside the respective area.

Access to a communication forum can preferably be denied to an
 5 interested communication participant by the communication participant who defined the communication forum, whereby it is possible for communication participants to define private communication forums which cannot be listened to by unauthorized communications participants.

Communications terminals are preferably interconnected for a
 10 communication round by conference circuit. This has the advantage that already known communications functions, namely the conference circuit, can be made use of in communication forums for setting up rounds of communication.

In an embodiment variant, a communication participant can register for a
 15 communication forum when no other communication participant has yet selected the respective communication forum, a communication round being able to begin between the registered communication participant and at least one other communication participant when this at least one other communication participant has selected the respective communication forum.

In an embodiment variant, a said communication participant can register
 20 for a at least one communication forum and can specify at least one other communication participant as a communication partner for respective communication forums so that he is notified if a specified communication partner has selected a respective communication forum. It is thereby possible
 25 for the registered communication participant to be included in the communication round of a respective communication forum only when a specified communication partner has selected a respective communication forum, which, in different variants, can take place automatically, for example, with or without previous notification of the registered communication
 30 participant.

In an embodiment variant, at least certain communication forums have a temporally limited availability, which can be set by the communication participant who has defined the respective communication forum, for example, or by the operator of the communication forum service.

The invention also relates to a chat server which comprises a communications module for connection with telecommunications networks in which networks communication participants communicate with one another by means of communications terminals, which chat server comprises a table in
 5 which information about communication forums is stored. Moreover said chat server comprises a command module which is able to receive and execute commands from communication participants via telecommunications networks, the command module making it possible for communication participants to select a communication forum by means of commands, or respectively to leave
 10 a communication forum. The communication module is set up such that it is able to interconnect at least two communication participants who have selected a common communication forum for a round of communication via a said telecommunications network, or remove a communication participant from a communication round, the communication module making it possible for
 15 communication participants to communicate in a round of communication by means of spoken language.

An embodiment of the present invention will be described in the following with reference to an example. The example of the embodiment is illustrated by the following attached figure:

20 Figure 1 shows a block diagram which illustrates diagrammatically a chat server which is connected to telecommunications networks and communications terminals communicating therein.

The reference numeral 3 refers to a chat server which is based, for example, on a conventional communications server and has the necessary
 25 hardware and software components to perform the function and services of a communications forum server in the method described in the following, i.e. to make it possible for communication participants in telecommunications networks 1, 2, in particular in mobile networks 1, to select communication forums by means of their communications terminals 11, 12, 21, in particular
 30 mobile devices 11, 12, if necessary to define new communication forums, and to take part in rounds of communication in selected communication forums which are carried out in spoken language.

The chat server 3 has a table 33 in which information about communication forums is stored, for instance a designation or a name for a

communication forum which indicates e.g. a topic or a target group of communication participants, an indication about the number of communication participants who are taking part in the communication round of the communication forum, indications about a temporally and/or geographically limited validity and/or availability of the communication forum, for instance an expiration data and/or time indication, respectively a place designation or geographic coordinates and area indications, indications about who has defined the communication forum, for instance a temporary or generally valid identification of a communication participant or a reference to a communication forum provider, indications about the language of the communication round of the communication forum as well as other data some of which will be explained more closely in the following description. The table 33 is implemented, for example, on the same hardware platform as the chat server 3 or on another computer accessible to the chat server 3, and can be read and described by programmed software modules of the chat server 3.

The chat server 3 comprises a communications module 31 with the necessary hardware and software components to connect the chat server 3 with telecommunications networks 1, 2 and to communicate with communications terminals 11, 12, 21 over these telecommunications networks 1, 2. As was already mentioned above, the telecommunications networks 1, 2 connected to the chat server 3 comprise at least one mobile network 1, for instance a GSM, UMTS or another mobile network, via which communication participants can communicate with the chat server 3 using mobile devices 1, 12, for instance mobile radio telephones 11 or suitable communication-capable laptop or palmtop computers 12, for example via the communications module 31. As is shown in Figure 1, fixed networks 2 can also be connected to the chat server 3, for instance the public switched telephone network (PSTN), an ISDN network (Integrated Services Digital Network), a LAN (Local Area Network) or WAN (Wide Area Network), or an Intranet or the Internet, via which communication participants can communicate with the chat server 3 using fixed, i.e. fixed installed, communications terminals 21, for instance telephone apparatuses, for example via the communications module 31. The communications module 31 can also be set up such that other special telecommunications networks are able to be connected to the chat server 3, for example power networks suitable for communication, so-called PLC (Power

Line Communication) networks, via which communications terminals are able to communicate with one another by means of suitable power line communications modules, as is described, for example, in the not yet published patent application (application number PCT/CH98/00553) in the name of the present applicant, or so-called super-networks, which have at least a fixed network and a super-network VLR (Visitor Location Register), in which super-network VLR communication participants can register with SIM cards (Subscriber Identity Module), for instance, as is described, for example, in the not yet published patent application (application number PCT/CH99/00087) in the name of the present applicant.

The communication module 31 has in particular the function of interconnecting a plurality of communication participants with their communications terminals 11, 12, 21, for example in a conference circuit, e.g. when the communication participants have selected the same communication forum, as will be described later, it being possible to switch arriving communication participants into an already existing conference circuit, or remove communication participants, who are leaving, from the joint connection, for instance from the conference circuit. One skilled in the art will understand that the communications module 31 is able to achieve this connection directly or is able to avail of corresponding services of a suitable network unit as an aid, for example services of a switching center, for setting up the conference circuit.

To obtain access to the services of the chat server 3, an interested communication participant, using a communications terminal 11, 12, 21, makes a connection to the chat server 3 by calling, for example, a service number established therefor. The services of the chat server 3 can, for example, be made available only to authorized communication participants, a personal access code being demanded from the communication participant, for instance, or his authorization being checked, e.g. on the basis of a user identification that is stored, for instance, on an identification module 113 (removably) connected to the communications terminal 11, e.g. an SIM card (Subscriber Identification Module) or in an applet in a Java SIM card (Java is a registered trademark of the company Sun Microsystems) and transmitted to the chat server 3.

The chat server 3 comprises a command module 32, for example a programmed software module which, for example via a software interface, has access to the services of the described communications module 31 and can access the table 33, as was described above. The command module 32
 5 receives commands via the communications module 31 that have been transmitted to the chat server 3 via telecommunications networks 1, 2 by communication participants by means of their communications terminals 11, 12, 21.

In a first embodiment variant, the command module 32 transmits to the
 10 communication participant, or to the communications terminal 11, 12, 21 of this communication participant, various menu options by spoken language, for instance by means of a speech synthesizer or by means of recorded language sequences, which options are able to be selected by the communication
 15 participant by means of operating elements 112, 212 of the communications terminal 11, 12, 21, it being useful, for instance, if the communication participant always receives from the command module 32 an overview of the most important commands upon entry of a particular command, for instance upon entry of the * key. After a communication participant has established a communication connection to the chat server 3, the command module 32 is
 20 able to transmit to the respective communication participant, or to the communications terminal 11, 12, 21 of this communication participant, first an overview of the most important commands, for instance, as well as a list of the available communication forums.

In a second embodiment variant, the command module 32 comprises a
 25 speech recognition module, which makes it possible for the communication participants to transmit direct, spoken commands to the command module 32 using their communications terminals 11, 12, 21, these commands being preferably predefined key words, for example in a language that can be selected, and it being useful also in this embodiment variant if the
 30 communication participant always receives, transmitted from the command module 32, an overview of the most important commands by transmitting a particular command, for instance by transmitting the key word "help". For this second embodiment variant it also makes sense if the communication participant can switch between a command mode and a communication mode
 35 upon transmission of a particular command to the command module 32, for

example upon transmission of the key words "switch mode." After a communication participant has established a communication connection with the chat server 3, the command module 32 can transmit to the respective communication participant, or to the communication terminal 11, 12, 21 of this communication participant, first an overview of the most important commands, for example, as well as a list of the available communication forums, for instance by means of a speech synthesizer or by means of stored language sequences.

In a third embodiment variant, a menu structure is shown to the communication participant on the display 111, 211 of the communications terminal, from which menu structure the communication participant is able to select menu options by means of operating elements 112, 212 of the communications terminal 11, 21 and have them transmitted automatically to the command module 32 of the chat server 3. One skilled in the art will understand that the menu structure and its presentation and operation can be implemented in the most various ways. For example, corresponding programmed software functions can be implemented based on WAP (Wireless Application Protocol) or by means of available SIM tool kits; corresponding programmed software functions can be stored and executed, for instance in the form of applets, e.g. Java applets (Java is a registered trademark of Sun Microsystems), in the communications terminal 11, for instance on a chipcard 113, e.g. a SIM card, or can be transmitted by the chat server 3 to the communications terminal 11, 12, 21 for execution. Executable programs and/or data, for instance information from the chat server 3 about available communication forums, which are integrated into the menu structure in the communications terminal 11, 12, 21, or menu options selected by the communication participant that are directed to the command module 32 of the chat server 3, can thereby be transmitted over the telecommunications network 1, 2, for example by means of special short messages such as SMS (Short Message Services), USSD (Unstructured Supplementary Services Data) or other messages via a mobile network 1, or via the service channel of an ISDN network 2. It is also possible for the chat server 3 to transmit the entire menu structure together with the mentioned data, for instance in an applet, via the telecommunications network 1 to a communications terminal 11, 12.

These three different embodiment variants can be alternative design variants or they can be offered as complementary design variants by the chat server 3, for instance as options that can be selected for different types of communications terminals 11, 12, 21, available under different service numbers, for instance. It should be explicitly pointed out here that the present invention makes it possible for communication participants from various and differing telecommunications networks 1, 2, to take part in a common communication forum, in particular owing to the possibility of connecting different telecommunications networks 1, 2 to the chat server 3 and thanks to the different mechanisms for receiving commands and for supporting different communications terminals 11, 12, 21.

The commands which are able to be transmitted by the communication participant to the command module 32 of the chat server 3 include commands such as are customary in the chat rooms, mentioned at the beginning, on the Internet, insofar as these commands can be used for rounds of communication in spoken language. For example, a communication participant is able to register with a user name that is unambiguous for the respective communication forum service, is able to select a desired communication forum from the menu options described above, is able to leave a selected communication forum, is able to define a new communication forum, is able to grant or refuse access to the personally defined communication forum to other interested communication participants, is able to call up information about available communication forums, for instance the number and/or user names, e.g. aliases or actual names, of communication participants taking part in a communication forum, is able to transmit confidential messages to specified communication participants that cannot be heard by other communication participants, etc.

It should also be mentioned here that a communication participant is able to register for a desired communication forum when no other communication participant has yet selected this respective communication forum. A round of communication between the registered communication participant and a further communication participant who selects the respective communication forum, is thereby initiated through interconnection of the respective communications terminals 11, 12, 21, this taking place automatically, for instance, or a message being first transmitted by the

command module 32 of the chat server 3 to the registered communication participant relating to the further communication participant, and, through entry of a corresponding command, the registered communication participant being able to take part in the communication round of the respective communication forum or not. In a similar way, a communication participant is able to register another communication participant specified by him with a particular communication forum, or, in a variant, with all communication forums available at the respective chat server 3, so that the registered communication participant is included in the communication round of the particular communication forum, or respectively any desired communication forum, when the specified further communication participant selects the particular communication forum, or respectively any desired available communication forum. The communication participant can also register another communication participant specified by him in such a way that he is informed, e.g. by the command module 32 of the chat server 3, when the specified further communication participant selects a particular, or respectively any desired available, communication forum or leaves such a communication forum.

In a further embodiment variant, the current geographic position of a communication participant can be taken into consideration by the command module 32 of the chat server 3 in that it is compared, for example, with the above-mentioned data about geographic validity and/or availability of the communication forum, so that only those communication forums are offered to the respective communication participant for selection that are valid or respectively available for his current geographic position, for instance. For this purpose, the current position of a communication participant is transmitted to the chat server 3, it being determined, for example, by position determining means in the communications terminal 11, 12, for instance through a satellite-based GPS receiver (Global Positioning System) or a terrestrial TPS receiver (Terrestrial Positioning System), or is determined by the mobile network 1. The selection of communication forums can also be limited by the chat server 3 taking into account the current date and/or time in that the above-mentioned data on a limited temporal validity and/or availability of the communication forum are taken into consideration. In an application example, a communication forum can be defined such that it relates to a temporally and geographically limited event, for instance a sports event of a local organizer

that takes place at a defined point in time. A communication forum can also be limited with respect to communication participants belonging to a particular telecommunication network 1, 2 or to a particular network operator.

If, according to the embodiment variant described above for command transmission, a communication participant selects a particular communication forum, first some information about the respective communication forum can be sent to him, for instance, by the command module, e.g. how many communication participants are already taking part in a communication round in the communication forum, the geographic distance between the communication participant and the communication participants already taking part in a communication round of the communication forum, whether communication participants have reserved for the communication forum or in what language the communication round of the communication forum is being carried out. On the basis of this information, the communication participant can decide to take part in the communication round of the respective communication forum, to reserve therefor, or to choose another communication forum. When the communication participant indicates to the command module 32 of the chat server 3 with corresponding command transmission that he would like to take part in the communication round of the respective communication forum, the command module 32 switches the communications terminal 11, 12, 21 of the communication participant into an already existing communication round, with the aid of above-mentioned functions of the communications module 31, by adding on to an already existing conference circuit, or it sets up a new communication round between the communication participant and further communication participants registered for the respective communication forum. By terminating the communication connection to the chat server 3, or by transmitting corresponding commands to the command module 32, the communication participant is able to leave a selected communication forum. Information about participation of communication participants in communication rounds of the communication forum are continuously updated in the table 33 by the command module 32, a reference to an established connection, for example a conference circuit, also being stored in the table 33 for each communication forum.

Communication forum services can be offered free of charge, for example, to interested communication participants, the costs for the service

being assumed by a sponsoring company for advertising purposes, for instance, or being covered by the proceeds thereby earned from the use of communications services to the chat server 3, that are subject to fees, when the communication forum service is offered by a communications operator. The

5 access to communication forum services subject to charges can be controlled, as described above, through access codes or preparation of a list of authorized communication participants. It can also be of interest to sell to interested parties, or lease with licensing fees, chat servers 3, ready for operation, or data carriers with software modules stored thereon for control of a suitable

10 communications server as chat server 3. In addition, chipcards can also be sold, for example SIM cards 113, which contain suitable software modules for participating in communication forums offered by one or more chat servers 3, using a suitable communications terminal 11. Moreover, potential earnings result from a communication forum being moderated by a moderator, the

15 moderator being a well known figure, a specialist in a particular field, or an entertainer, for instance.

Claims

1. A communication method, in which at least two communication participants communicate with one another by means of spoken language in a round of communication by means of communications terminals (11, 12, 21) via a telecommunications network (1, 2), the said communications terminals (11, 12, 21) being interconnected via the said telecommunications network (1, 2) for a said communication round when the said communication participants have selected a common communication forum, wherein

the said communication participants select the common communication forum by means of the said communications terminals (11, 12, 21).

2. The communication method according to claim 1, wherein at least certain of the said communications terminals are mobile devices (11, 12), and the said communications network comprises at least one mobile network.

3. The communication method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the said communication participants select, via a menu structure, a communication forum from a list of defined communication forums or define a new communication forum, a defined communication forum being assigned a designation, designating for example a topic.

4. The communication method according to claim 3, wherein the said menu structure is displayed on a display (111, 211) of the said communications terminals (11, 12, 21), and the said communication forum is selected or defined by means of operating elements (112, 212) of the said communications terminals (11, 12, 21).

5. The communication method according to claim 3, wherein the said communication forum is selected or defined under speech-controlled menu guidance by means of operating elements (112, 212) of the said communications terminal (11, 12, 21).

6. The communication method according to one of the claims 1 to 5, wherein at least certain of the said communication forums are available only to communication participants located in a particular geographical area assigned

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to the respective communication forum.

7. The communication method according to one of the claims 3 to 6, wherein access to a said communication forum can be denied to an interested communication participant by the said communication participant who defined
5 the said communication forum.

8. The communication method according to one of the claims 1 to 7, wherein the said communications terminals (11, 12, 21) are interconnected for a said communication round by means of conference circuit.

9. The communication method according to one of the claims 1 to 8, wherein one of the said communication participants registers for a
10 communication forum when no other communication participant has yet selected the respective communication forum, and a round of communication between the registered communication participant and at least one other communication participant begins when this at least one other communication
15 participant has selected the respective communication forum.

10. The communication method according to one of the claims 1 to 9, wherein one of the said communication participants registers for at least one communication forum specifying in addition at least one other communication participant as a communication partner for the respective communication
20 forum, so that he is notified when a specified communication partner has selected a respective communication forum.

11. The communication method according to one of the claims 1 to 10, wherein at least certain of the said communication forums have a temporally limited availability.

25 12. A chat server (3) which comprises a communications module (31) for connection with telecommunications networks (1, 2) in which communication participants communicate with one another by means of communications terminals (11, 12, 21), which server has a table (33) in which information about communication forums is stored, and which server has a command module (32)
30 that is set up such that it is able to receive and execute commands from the said communication participants, the said command module (32) enabling the said communication participants to select one of the said communication

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forums by means of the said commands, the said communications module (31) being set up such that it is able to interconnect at least two of the said communication participants, who have selected a common communication forum, for a round of communication, in which the said communication participants communicate by means of spoken language, over a said telecommunications network (1, 2), wherein

the command module (32) is moreover set up such that it is able to receive over the said telecommunications networks (1, 2) said commands entered by the said communication participants by means of the said communication terminals (11, 12, 21).

13. The chat server (3) according to claim 12, wherein at least certain of the said communications terminals are mobile devices (11, 12), and said telecommunications networks comprise at least one mobile network (1).

14. The chat server (3) according to one of the claims 12 or 13, wherein the said command module (32) is set up such that the said communication participants are able to select a communication forum from the said table (33) or define a new communication forum, a designation being assigned to a defined communication forum, designating for example a topic.

15. The chat server (3) according to claim 14, wherein the said command module (32) is set up such that it is able to prepare a list of the defined communication forums stored in the said table (33) and transmit it by means of the said communications module (31) to the said communications terminals (11, 12, 21) over the said telecommunications networks (1, 2).

16. The chat server (3) according to one of the claims 12 to 15, wherein at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table (33) are limited geographically and contain indications about a geographic area, and the said command module (32) is set up such that it makes available geographically limited communication forums only to communication participants who are located in this geographic area.

17. The chat server (3) according to one of the claims 14 to 16, wherein at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table (33) contain indications about a first communication participant who

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has defined the respective communication forum, and the said command module (32) is set up such that it is able to pass on commands from a second communication participant regarding the selection of one of the said communication forums to the first communication participant and is able to
5 receive a command from this first communication participant to deny the second communication participant access to the respective communication forum.

18. The chat server (3) according to one of the claims 12 to 17, wherein the said communications module (31) is set up such that it is able to
10 interconnect communications terminals (11, 12, 21) for one of the said communication rounds by means of conference circuit.

19. The chat server (3) according to one of the claims 12 to 18, wherein at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table (33) contain indications about communication participants who have
15 registered for a communication forum when no other communication participant has yet selected the respective communication forum, and the said command module (32) is set up such that it is able to connect a communication round between the communication participant who has registered and at least one other communication participant when this at least one other communication
20 participant has selected the respective communication forum.

20. The chat server (3) according to one of the claims 12 to 19, wherein at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table (33) contain indications about first communication participants, who have registered for a communication forum, and about second communication
25 participants, who have been specified as communication partners by the first communication participants, and the said command module (32) is set up such that it informs a registered first communication participant when a specified communication partner has selected a respective communication forum.

21. The chat server (3) according to one of the claims 12 to 20, wherein
30 at least certain of the entries relating to communication forums stored in the said table (33) contain indications relating to a temporally limited availability.

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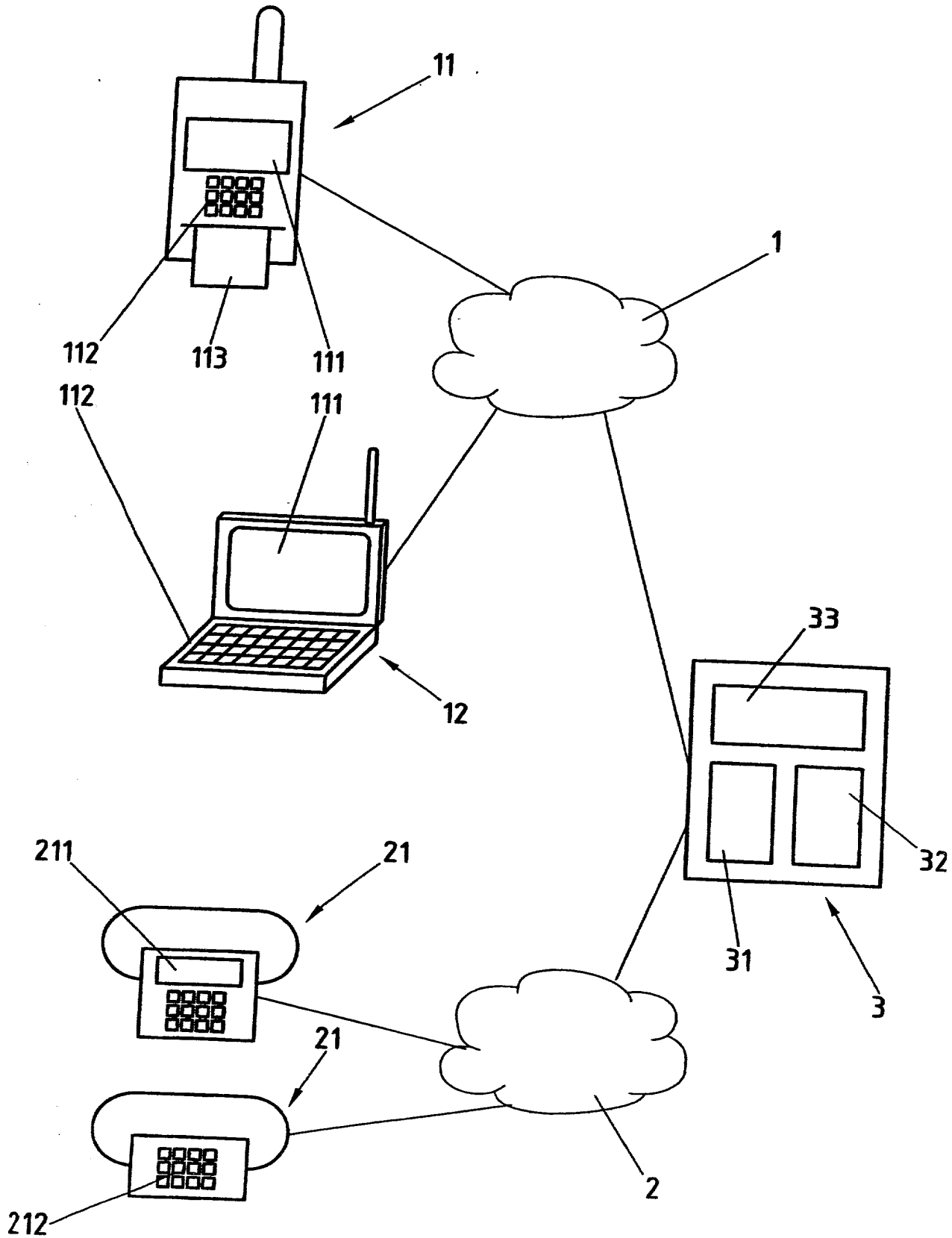


FIG. 1

Declaration and Power of Attorney For Patent Application

Erklärung Für Patentanmeldungen Mit Vollmacht

German Language Declaration

Als nachstehend benannter Erfinder erkläre ich hiermit an Eides Statt:

dass mein Wohnsitz, meine Postanschrift, und meine Staatsangehörigkeit den im Nachstehenden nach meinem Namen aufgeführten Angaben entsprechen,

dass ich, nach bestem Wissen der ursprüngliche, erste und alleinige Erfinder (falls nachstehend nur ein Name angegeben ist) oder ein ursprünglicher, erster und Miterfinder (falls nachstehend mehrere Namen aufgeführt sind) des Gegenstandes bin, für den dieser Antrag gestellt wird und für den ein Patent beantragt wird für die Erfindung mit dem Titel:

deren Beschreibung

(zutreffendes ankreuzen)

☒ hier beigefügt ist.

☐ am _____ unter der

Anmeldungsseriennummer _____

eingereicht wurde und am _____
abgeändert wurde (falls tatsächlich abgeändert).

Ich bestätige hiermit, dass ich den Inhalt der obigen Patentanmeldung einschliesslich der Ansprüche durchgesehen und verstanden habe, die eventuell durch einen Zusatzantrag wie oben erwähnt abgeändert wurde.

Ich erkenne meine Pflicht zur Offenbarung irgendwelcher Informationen, die für die Prüfung der vorliegenden Anmeldung in Einklang mit Absatz 37, Bundesgesetzbuch, Paragraph 1.56(a) von Wichtigkeit sind, an.

Ich beanspruche hiermit ausländische Prioritätsvorteile gemäss Abschnitt 35 der Zivilprozessordnung der Vereinigten Staaten, Paragraph 119 aller unten angegebenen Auslandsanmeldungen für ein Patent oder eine Erfindersurkunde, und habe auch alle Auslandsanmeldungen für ein Patent oder eine Erfindersurkunde nachstehend gekennzeichnet, die ein Anmeldedatum haben, das vor dem Anmeldedatum der Anmeldung liegt, für die Priorität beansprucht wird.

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name,

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

Communication Method and Suitable Device

for Communication Forums

the specification of which

(check one)

☒ is attached hereto.

☒ was filed on 14 May 1999 as

Application Serial No. PCT/CH 99/00205

and was amended on _____
(if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a).

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, §119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

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German Language Declaration

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Prior Foreign Applications
(Frühere ausländische Anmeldungen)

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(Number) (Nummer)	(Country) (Land)

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(Number) (Nummer)	(Country) (Land)

Ich beanspruche hiermit Prioritätsvorteile unter Title 35, US-Code, § 119(e) aller US-Hilfsanmeldungen wie unten aufgezählt.

(Application No.) (Aktenzeichen)	(Filing Date) (Anmeldetag)
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(Application No.) (Aktenzeichen)	(Filing Date) (Anmeldetag)
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Ich beanspruche hiermit die mir unter Title 35, US-Code, § 120 zustehenden Vorteile aller unten aufgeführten US-Patentanmeldungen bzw. § 365(c) aller PCT internationalen Anmeldungen, welche die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika benennen, und erkenne, insofern der Gegenstand eines jeden früheren Anspruchs dieser Patentanmeldung nicht in einer US-Patentanmeldung, bzw. PCT internationalen Anmeldung in in einer gemäß dem ersten Absatz von Title 35, US-Code, § 112 vorgeschriebenen Art und Weise offenbart wurde, meine Pflicht zur Offenbarung jeglicher Informationen an, die zur Prüfung der Patentfähigkeit in Einklang mit Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56 von Belang sind und die im Zeitraum zwischen dem Anmeldetag der früheren Patentanmeldung und dem nationalen oder im Rahmen des Vertrags über die Zusammenarbeit auf dem Gebiet des Patentwesens (PCT) gültigen internationalen Anmeldetags bekannt geworden sind.

(Application No.) (Aktenzeichen)	(Filing Date) (Anmeldetag)
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I hereby claim foreign priority under Title 35, United States Code, § 119(a)-(d) or § 365(b) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or § 365(a) of any PCT International application which designated at least one country other than the United States, listed below and have also identified below, by checking the box, any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate, or PCT International application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed.

Priority Not Claimed
Priorität nicht beansprucht

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(Day/Month/Year Filed) (Tag/Monat/Jahr der Anmeldung)	

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(Day/Month/Year Filed) (Tag/Monat/Jahr der Anmeldung)	

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, § 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below.

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, § 120 of any United States application(s), or § 365(c) of any PCT International application designating the United States, listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States or PCT International application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, § 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT International filing date of this application.

(Status) (patented, pending, abandoned)
(Status) (patentiert, schwebend, aufgegeben)

(Status) (patented, pending, abandoned)
(Status) (patentiert, schwebend, aufgegeben)

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.